

A booming voice echoed down the drab corridors of UNIT's headquarters, the words clearly audible to Liz Shaw as she mixed reagents over a Bunsen flame. "Really, my dear Brigadier! I can see no reason to have a half-educated, female bureaucrat foisted on me. I assure you that I can manage a laboratory quite well enough on my own."

The Brigadier's reply was restrained enough that she couldn't make out his words. She carefully placed the bubbling flask on a ceramic pad and turned to greet the newcomers with a sweet smile. "And I see no reason to work with a chauvinist old fossil, who hasn't the manners to keep his reactionary opinions to himself!"

Lethbridge-Stewart hesitated in the doorway for a moment and then led the scowling Doctor into the work room. He decided to ignore both sets of remarks, and start the conversation from scratch. "Doctor, allow me to present..."

"A half-educated female called Doctor Elizabeth Shaw." Liz put a deliberate emphasis on the word 'Doctor' as she glared at the man who was UNIT's scientific advisor..

"Ah, quite... and this is..."

"I am known as The Doctor, Miss Shaw," and he stressed the definite article, "and I think your potassium fluoridate is starting to eat through the bench.

Liz swore as she spun and saw the contents of her flask had begun bubbling over.

The Brigadier's trained sensibilities decided that this was one battle field he wanted no part of. Unnoticed he strolled out of the laboratory and headed for the pile of paperwork waiting for him in his office. It wasn't often he considered red tape the lesser of two evils, but this occasion was one of them!

\* \* \*

Two hours later Liz was seething with frustration. The Doctor

had been working on a complex and very intriguing piece of technology all afternoon, and her only permitted contribution had been to hand him a screwdriver or soldering iron as required, and to pointedly ignore a request that she make a pot of coffee. The Doctor muttered something about "dematerialisation rectifier circuits" and disappeared into that blue box of his, presumably searching for a component he needed.

Liz took the opportunity to get a good, close look at what he'd been tinkering with. It was a strange mishmash of the latest transistorised technology and valves that must have come from the earliest days of radar, all wired up to little bits of ceramic that reminded her of nothing more than potsherds from a display in the British Museum. Yet as she turned the lash-up this way and that, she got the strangest feeling that it was something far more than the sum of its parts - there was a sense that it was out of place here, like a raygun from a Dan Dare comic strip.

Intrigued by the unconventional circuitry, she attempted to trace the path of one particular connection by following it with the tip of a pencil. Each time she did so she ended up at a different point! Annoyed by her failure, Liz carefully loosened one of the mounting screws to get a better look at the interior.

"Just what do you think you're playing at!"

Startled by the Doctor's booming voice just behind her, Liz dropped the mechanism onto the surface of the bench, shattering several of the delicate valves.

"Now look what you've done, woman! It will take me a day's work at least to replace those components."

That was the last straw. She spun furiously to face her tormentor. "Well if you hadn't sneaked up behind me and bellowed it wouldn't have happened!"

"Sign of a guilty conscience, Miss Shaw." The Doctor rubbed the side of his nose, thoughtfully. "What did I impress on you when I agreed to allow your assistance?"

Liz bristled at the implied subservience, but reluctantly answered.

"All right, I know. I wasn't to tamper with any unfamiliar equipment unless you were present. A ridiculous instruction, I'm not some child, likely to burn down a house with a box of matches you know!"

"In the presence of this sort of technology that is EXACTLY what you are. What did I say the consequences would be if you disobeyed?"

"That I'd be reprimanded." Big deal, thought Liz to herself. A black mark on her UNIT file was hardly going to make much difference, since was leaving this crackpot outfit just as soon as she could pull enough strings.

"Indeed." The Doctor pulled one of the old high-backed chairs from against the wall and settled himself into it. He looked at her expectantly.

She shrugged. "I don't understand."

"Give me your hand, if you'd be so kind."

Hesitantly, Liz unfolded her arms and approached the chair. She held out her left hand, palm up, suppressing a smile at the thought that the Doctor was about to read her future line. Maybe she was about to go on a long journey and meet a tall, dark stranger. With sudden quickness the Doctor grasped her wrist, pressing carefully as he tugged her forward. She tried to pull away, but her legs refused to obey and she dropped face down across the Doctor's knees, the impact driving the breath from her. What in heaven's name was that? Some sort of martial art trick?

She was still trying to draw in a lungfull of oxygen when both her wrists were gathered behind her back in the Doctor's firm grip. With a sense of outrage she felt the hem of her tan skirt being raised. The man was actually exposing her underwear to public view! Desperately she struggled, kicking out with her numb legs and striving to pull her hands free, but the Doctor was implacable.

"I hope that this reprimand will convince you that I only give instructions necessary for the safety of others."

His words were followed by the palm of his free hand striking her bottom with a crack that seemed to echo deafeningly around the lab. The impact drove out whatever breath she had managed to snatch. She felt her head spinning with the impossibility of what was happening to her. It wasn't the pain: she'd received worse from the slippings at the private girls school she'd attended; it was the humiliation in the matter of fact way that this man calmly put her across his knee and spanked her as if she were no more than a naughty child!

She opened her mouth to protest when the second blow came, and all that escaped her lips was a rather inadequate squeak. She could feel the stinging in her buttocks now, and imagine the skin reddening under the attack. She was distracted by the idle thought that she was glad she'd made sure to choose a matching pair of knickers for her outfit, and then angrily flung the irrelevance back into the recesses of her mind.

The third blow stung like hell, and she couldn't contain the grunt that it forced from her. Her entire backside was now aflame. She stopped struggling as a waste of effort, and concentrated on preparing her self for the next smack. Maybe relaxation would make the pain feel less. One part of her analytical mind started compiling data on the physiology of spanking, while another part smiled wryly.

She was disturbed to feel that the fourth blow felt more like a caress than a punishment. Had she gone numb? Had the Doctor's strength given out? (Not from the vice-like grip that pinned her wrists and kept her flattened over his knees!). The tingling had spread to her upper thighs and belly, and she realised that she felt somehow loose - hollow inside. The analytical part began to catalogue and compare these physiological responses with others that she knew of, but she refused to listen to the dry inner voice.

The fifth blow fell, hard and stern. She was astounded to hear the deep moan that issued from her lips without orders or warning.

She could feel the trembling of her legs and arms and the mild ache in her shoulders as they complained of the unaccustomed position. She couldn't move. Didn't want to move. Waited with dreadful anticipation for the sixth blow; dreaded and anticipated the impact and the effect it heralded. It never came.

"There, I think that will do." The voice of the Doctor, as he readjusted her skirt.

She tried to stand on legs that felt as if they belonged to someone else, a small part of her aware that she couldn't entirely blame the feeling on whatever the Judo hold he'd used. Strong arms supported her until she grasped the chair back for support. She dreaded looking up. He would be looking into her eyes, reading things in them that weren't there - that couldn't be there. Or he'd be leering in that patronising male way, confident that he'd taught a mere woman some sort of lesson about masculine power.

"Hand me the copper wire, would you Liz?"

She looked up. The Doctor was stood at the workbench, his back to her, intent on examining the damage to his strange device.

Absently rubbing her stinging rear she moved to comply, thoughts whirling chaotically through her mind. Perhaps this crackpot organisation deserved her services for a little while. Until new arrangements could be made, of course.